The seventeenth and final field season of the current excavation campaign at Ziyaret Tepe, the Late Assyrian city of Tušhan, was conducted between July and September of 2013. Prof. Timothy Matney served as the scientific director. Our senior staff included: Dr. John MacGinnis of Cambridge University, Dr. Dirk Wicke of the University of Mainz, and Prof. Dr. Kemalettin Köroğlu of Marmara University. We were pleased to welcome the new director of the regional Diyarbakır Archaeological Museum, Mehmet Akif Bilici, and appreciate his help in making the 2013 field season a success. Our able government representative was Esma Bedirhanoğlu, also of the Diyarbakır Archaeology Museum. We acknowledge her contribution to our expedition. Previous preliminary reports of our work, ongoing since 1997, can be found in earlier editions of this journal, as well as in Anatolica (Matney 1998; Matney and Somers 1999; Matney and Bauer 2000; Matney et al. 2002; Matney et al. 2003; Matney and Rainville 2005; Matney et al. 2007; Matney et al. 2009; Matney et al. 2011).

* Timothy MATNEY, Department of Anthropology and Classical Studies, University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-1910 USA/ABD.
John MACGINNIS McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge/İNGİLTERE.
Dirk WICKE, Institut für Ägyptologie und Altorientalistik, Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz/ALMANYA.
Kemalettin KÖROĞLU Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Eski Çağ Tarihi Anabilim Dalı, Marmara Üniversitesi, İstanbul/TÜRKİYE.
Ziyaret Tepe is situated within the broad alluvial floodplain of the Tigris River approximately 20 km west of its confluence with the Batman Su and just east of the modern city of Bismil. The site falls within the impact area of the soon to be completed Ilisu hydroelectric dam. As reported earlier, Ziyaret Tepe has a long occupational history spanning the Early Bronze through Middle Iron Ages, with periodic later occupational levels in the Late Iron/Hellenistic, Late Roman, Medieval, and Ottoman periods. However, the zenith of occupation at Ziyaret Tepe was as an urban center in the 9th through 7th centuries BC during the Late Assyrian period. Historical inscriptions explain that the city of Tušhan was re-founded following a hiatus brought about by the Middle Assyrian political collapse of the 12th century BC. In 882 BC, King Ashurnasirpal II claims to have rebuilt the city which was continuously occupied by the Assyrians until its abandonment in 611 BC after the collapse of the imperial heartland (Grayson 1991; Roaf in Matney et al. 2002: 49-51). These Assyrian historical accounts correlate closely with the architectural history and stratigraphy of the excavated remains at Ziyaret Tepe.

Ziyaret Tepe comprises a high citadel mound in the northern part of the site, surrounded by an extensive lower town to the east, south, and west. Excavations took place in five areas in 2013 [Fig. 1]. In 2013, Dr. Wicke completed his excavations on the high citadel mound in Operation AN. Prof. Dr. Köroğlu returned to Operation K in the southern lower town, an area previously excavated in 2003 and 2004. Dr. MacGinnis excavated in two new areas of the southern lower town – Operations Y and Z – as well as directing a small probe (Operation W) inside a large public building excavated over the course of a decade starting in 2001. Finally, we also continued our subsurface electrical resistivity survey of the western lower town at Ziyaret Tepe in hopes of clarifying the nature of the public buildings found there via excavation and geophysical prospection. This report will focus on the excavations.

Excavations in Operation AN: the Bronze Palace

Since its initial discovery in 2000, our primary interest in Operation AN has been to untangle the complex ground plan and chronology of an Assyrian
palace which we refer to as the “Bronze Palace” (Matney et al. 2011: 69-72). The main task for this final season was to solve some questions related to the building techniques of the Bronze Palace and to explore the pre-Late Assyrian phases. To pursue these issues, work concentrated in trenches N1000 E1170 and N1000 E1160, where a deep sounding was first opened in 2009. The west section of this excavation area had eroded heavily during the last few years; therefore, it was cut back by 2m to the west along its full length with a goal of adding to our plan of the building and clarifying the nature of the rooms that lay to the west of the previous excavations.

Three primary building phases have been documented in the Bronze Palace: Phase I (7th century BC), Phase II (mid-8th century BC), and Phase III (possibly 9th century BC). In the northern part of the 2013 western extension, it was possible to trace the remains of the Phase II walls delimiting Room 19 [Fig. 2]. The collapse of the Phase II building in Room 19 included fragments of painted wall plaster, similar to those described in earlier reports from Room 7, but in poor condition. Immediately below, an earlier building phase (Phase III) followed the same basic plan supporting the conclusion that the Phase II palace immediately followed the Phase III palace chronologically, using its old walls as foundation.

By excavating through the palace floors, we were able to observe subfloor construction techniques used by the Assyrian builders. As documented earlier, the Bronze Palace had an extensive internal drainage system. In 2013, we exposed canal N-835 that led into cess-pit N-865 [Fig. 3]. Incorporated in the brick lining of the canal was half a brick with a gameboard scratched into it (N-835, ZT 41642) [Fig. 4]. The canal was cut by pit N-811, and a baked brick with semicircular hole in a direct line to the east running through wall N-265 indicates its point of origin. The canal and cess-pit would have served Room 6. Another drainage system, excavated previously in this area, serviced Room 9. The cess-pit was completely preserved with false vaulting in situ but was only reached in the final week of excavation. The uppermost six courses of the cesspit are mudbrick. The seventh course from the top mixes limestone
blocks and bricks. From the eighth course downward the sides of the cess-pit are made of unworked or roughly hewn limestone blocks of small to medium size. The bricks and stones are covered with a whitish layer of salt or phytoliths. The pit itself was empty for the top 1.40m and comprised rather soft, blackish-greyish material with a few bones and brick fragments.

By the end of the 2013 season, the occupational history within the Bronze Palace was clear. The earliest occupation remains discovered at the bottom of Room 6 did not reveal any clear architectural features. Wall N-539 and stone paving N-363 are to be dated to the Middle Assyrian period based on stratigraphy, a preliminary reading of the pottery, and the unusual thick (ca. 12 cm) bright orange bricks laid in light-grey mortar comprising N-539. However, the construction of stone wall foundation N-839 is than typical Middle Assyrian wall foundations and Dr. Wicke has argued on stratigraphic grounds that N-839 must represent a pre-middle Assyrian phase and, accordingly, that the deposits of N-854, N-857 and N-858 underneath ought to be considered as Late Bronze Age or earlier. In clearing Rooms 6 and 2, work was considerably hampered by the presence of two large pits. One of these pits (N-829) contained an unbaked clay tablet was found (ZT 41575) mixed with brick rubble that was thrown into the pit while building up the foundation to that room [Fig. 5]. The tablet, to be published fully in a subsequent publication, is early Late Assyrian in date and lists 25 cloth garments. In sum, this season has greatly contributed to confirm the phasing of the ‘Bronze Palace’ at Ziyaret Tepe. Before the Late Assyrian building was constructed, there must have existed a Middle Assyrian predecessor building incorporating a stone-paved courtyard and considerable mudbrick walls.

Excavation in Operation K: Assyrian private housing

Operation K is located in the southern lower town, in an area associated with the Late Assyrian city wall. The first excavations in Operation K were conducted under the supervision of Dr. John MacGinnis in 2003 and Prof. Dr. Kemalettin Köroğlu in 2004. During these previous two seasons, an area
of 20m by 10m was excavated, resulting in the discovery of the city wall running SE-NW direction, and a domestic residence constructed immediately inside the city wall. The city wall was constructed of mudbrick on top of an artificially raised terrace. The area outside of the wall was deeply trenched, creating a large moat in order to increase the city’s defenses as well as to direct rain water coming from a small tributary to the south through channels situated outside the walls and ultimately draining into the Tigris River. The 2013 work in Operation K aimed at exposing the eastward continuation of the Late Assyrian domestic building discovered during the 2003-2004 excavation seasons, and to determine its phases of use, complete plan, and function.

Previous excavation in Operation K had unearthed a building comprising four rooms (A-D), a courtyard (E) and a semi-open space to the north of the courtyard, dated to the 8th – 7th centuries BC. It is evident from in situ tannurs that two rooms (A and E) were used for cooking purposes. The courtyard to the north was paved with pebbles and re-used bricks, with a deep well (K-098) in the middle. The mudbrick walls were 80-90cm thick and Prof. Dr. Köroğlu’s excavations showed two phases of occupation. New excavations in 2013 were conducted to the east of the area dug in 2003-2004 in trench N750 E920. In 2013, the eastern half of Room C and two additional rooms were discovered. The plan of the Operation K building now comprises eight rooms [Fig. 6, showing late phase walls]. Five of these rooms (B, A, C, G and H) are situated on a NW-SE axis, adjacent to one another and parallel to the city wall for the course of about 20m. The newly excavated part of the building in Operation K also had two occupational phases and it was confirmed that the same ground plan was repeated in both phases. The mudbrick foundations of the later phase walls are somewhat better preserved than those of the earlier phase. Individual mudbrick sizes of both phases are similar, ranging between 38cm and 40cm on a side. The wall coursing system is a course of two full-bricks followed by a course of one half-brick on either side of a full-brick yielding wall thicknesses are 80-90cm, identical to those discovered in 2003-2004.
Room C was 3m by 3m in extent and has floors and associated artifacts corresponding to the both phases. The northern and eastern walls of the earlier phase were discovered at foundation level. The most important unit of this phase is a simple earthen grave dug into the mud floor aligned in a north-south direction. The head of the skeleton inside the grave is on the north, with the skull facing eastwards. The right hand was placed on the stomach, and the left hand was resting to the left side of the face. In the later phase (K-125), the floor was raised by approximately 20cm and a hearth (K-151) was placed above the earlier phase grave. Immediately beneath this later phase floor, there are two burials running parallel to the eastern (grave K-117) and southern (grave K-119) walls. There are no finds in the graves except a vessel base in grave K-119, where only the foot bones of the body are preserved. The entrance to Room C is reconstructed to be in the north. A possible baked brick threshold of the earlier phase and the pivot hole/door socket of the door were discovered on the northern wall in the northeast corner of the room. The later phase door must be on wall K-080 that runs in the same direction.

The two rooms east of Room C had their northern walls were damaged by numerous later pits. In some cases the walls can only be traced below the foundation floor level on the floors of the pits. Some mudbrick remains of a wall dividing rooms G and H were discovered at the bottom of a later phase pit. Room G is 3.0m X 2.5m in extent. Of the earlier phase walls of this room, the southern wall is discernable, whereas the other walls can only be traced as foundations. There are no in situ finds on the floor of the earlier phase. The western (K-111), northern (K-136) and southern walls K-110) of the later phase are discernable. The floor of this phase is not preserved, most likely due to its proximity to the surface. Room H was poorly preserved. The mud floor (K-129) of the earlier phase of Room H was exposed. However, the later phase floor could not be identified. The northern and southern walls of the earlier phase of this room are discernable, whereas only the traces of the eastern and western could be revealed. In the later phase, all walls (K-127, K-132, K-152) but the western wall were delimited.
The damage caused by the later phase buildings and pits is more extensive to the north side of the Late Assyrian building. The fact that the entrance to Room C and Room E is in this area and that traces were uncovered of a possible paved threshold in wall K-122 between Courtyard E and the open area suggest that the area to the north of rooms G and H was used as a general purpose space. In 2013, in addition to Late Assyrian pottery, the finds of two fibula fragments, one stone vessel fragment, one stamp seal and two beads aided the dating of this building in Operation K. It is notable that this material is of a generally lower quality and quantity than found at other more substantial domestic residences across Ziyaret Tepe, suggesting that this was an area of commoner housing.

In Operation K, on the northern side of the trench N750 E920, remains of a completely different character than typical Late Assyrian architecture were discovered just below the surface. The poorly preserved architecture of this occupational level consists of two drainage pipes and associated rows of oval paving stones, and groups of stones that could be post holes or bases of some sort were found. Similar rows of stones were discovered in previous excavation seasons both in Operations K and T and the analysis and dating of this later occupational layer continues in the 2014 study season.

Work in Operation K in 2013 allowed for the clarification of some previously indistinct details and correction of various earlier assessments made after the first excavations in 2003-2004. For instance, it is now understood that the courses of mudbrick which we considered to be benches in Room A and Room C are the walls of the earlier phase (cf. Matney and Rainville 2005: 33-35; Fig. 10). It is also understood that after the destruction of the earlier phase building, the rubble was cleared to the foundation level and the earlier phase floors were raised by 15-20cm. In the later phase, the building was shifted 80-90cm southwards and was rebuilt using the same plan. There is no evidence of fire or destruction in the Late Assyrian buildings. There is also continuity in use through both phases. Room C, excavated in 2013, appears to have been chosen for intramural burial during both phases. This situation is similar to
Room A and Room E, excavated in 2003-2004, being used as possible kitchens with tannurs in both phases. Consequently, it can be argued that there is not a long occupational gap between the two phases.

**Operation W**

Operation W was the designation given to renewed investigations into certain features in the administrative complex excavated between 2001 and 2010 as Operation G and Operation R. It consisted of two trenches designed to investigate specific questions. The first trench was placed in the area of Courtyard 11 [Fig. 7]. This is the southern of the two courtyards of Building 2, measuring 11 m (east-west) by 11.5 m (north-south) and paved with black and white river pebbles laid in a checkerboard mosaic. On the whole the pavement of Courtyard 11 was neatly laid but there were four areas where the pavement had been cut into and then relaid with much larger and rougher blocks (G-341, G-342, G-343, R-298). Our working theory was that these were graves. In order to test this theory we decide to excavate one of the features (G-341). Removal of the upper stones revealed a layer of hard brown clay 30cm thick, initially devoid of inclusions but in its lower part containing pebbles and some potsherds. Below this was an irregular pebble/cobble surface which in turn immediately overlay a much more substantial cobble surface which was well laid though not arranged in checkerboard squares in the manner of the upper pavement. This was clearly the pavement of a major earlier phase. These irregular features cut into courtyard 11 are not graves, but perhaps simply repairs, if not overly elegant ones.

Trench 2 was excavated in Operation W was sited in order to come down onto Room 10, the larger of the two archival rooms where cuneiform tablets were recovered in earlier seasons. Based on the discovery from Trench 1 that there was a major earlier phase to the building, the aim of Trench 2 was to investigate whether evidence for administrative use could be recovered from this earlier phase. We excavated the remaining parts of the floor levels as they had been left in 2002 (north of the trench) and 2003 (south of the trench). The
floor matrix consisted of red clay with patches of pebbles and cobbles as well as fragments of bitumen and some patches of ash. In this matrix we found a cuneiform tablet (ZT 44030) and a possible sealing (ZT 44031) [Fig. 8]. Removal of these surfaces came down onto a subfloor constructed of pink clay, which had a door socket in situ on the western side, establishing the location of the entrance into this room. Removing this packing exposed another surface, which consisted of a layer of broken mud brick overlying the floor, into which a pit for a pithos had been cut, the rim lined by a square of baked half-bricks. Excavating down further we reached the wall and upper floor level of the expected lower building phase. Below that floor level was a level of clay packing which in turn overlay a lower floor level. This lower level, which is on the same elevation as the lower cobble surface found in Trench 1, had a small door socket in situ on the western side and was associated with a large number of pithos fragments, further evidence of the protracted use of this space in this capacity.

Excavations in Operation Y

Operation Y was situated at the southwest edge of the lower town. The objective of the 2013 season was to investigate an area of architecture adjacent to the city wall, identified through geophysical survey, where the wall turns a corner. Preliminary interpretations of the geophysical maps suggested the presence of a large public building lying just inside the wall at this point. An initial area of 20m x 10m was opened at the beginning of the season comprising the grid squares N790 E820 and N800 E820. The recovered archaeology belonged to two main phases of activity; the Late Assyrian architecture of Tušhan’s lower town and a later, probably Medieval, phase of pits, cobbled features and human burials. This report will concentrate on the Late Assyrian levels except to note that four poorly preserved human burials found in the southern part of the excavation, overlying and slightly cutting the remains of the Late Assyrian city wall were of Medieval date based on their orientation and lack of grave goods.
Late Assyrian City Wall

The main feature of the Neo-Assyrian period architecture in Operation Y is the lower town’s city wall (Y-024) [Fig. 9]. The city wall intrudes into the southern half of square N790 E820, running SW-NE from the southwest corner of the square, making a right-angled turn and running southeast into the eastern section of the square. The city wall is very substantial at this point and, although the full width of the wall does not lie within the trench, it is at least 4.70m wide at this point. The manner in which the wall makes its 90° turn is unusual. Rather than making a square corner with square bricks in straight rows, the corner is constructed as a curve with concentric rows of bricks fanning out to make the turn. The bricks of the city wall vary in color, composition, and quality. Most bricks are fairly well made from a fine, hard, pale, silty clay, but poorer quality bricks are interspersed within the wall, made of courser reddish and greyish clays and siltier stony material suggesting numerous repairs or building episodes.

One possible explanation of why the Assyrian builders chose to construct a curved rather than a square corner is that a roadway was intended to run around the inside of the wall. An extremely hard-packed clay-rich deposit (Y-031) runs against the curve of the wall in a 2.40m wide strip. The heavily compacted clay contains frequent small-medium sized pebbles and a moderate amount of pot sherds, making it a very hard, durable construction. The placement of a roadway along the inside of the wall would have allowed troops and supplies to move along the defensive wall to and from the Operation Q gateway to the southeast, and a curved bend rather than a sharp corner here would have greatly eased the passage of people, animals and wheeled vehicles.

The only other element of Neo-Assyrian architecture preserved in Operation Y is the mudbrick wall (Y-029) of a building, which runs parallel to the northwest face of the city wall in the western part of the trench. It seems that only one course of this wall survives, suggesting that the building was deliberately levelled after it fell out of use. According to our stratigraphic reconstruction, it appears that after the completion of the city wall and the roadway
(Y-031), the area immediately inside the wall was temporarily occupied by a large building that was subsequently levelled leaving only trace remains of a wall (Y-029).

**Operation Z**

Operation Z, located on the SW area of the Lower Town, was excavated at the end of the 2013 season. The area was selected for investigation due to features identified through previous geophysical survey. The excavations revealed a phase of later occupation with modest architecture comprising a low stone wall, and associated plaster floor; this phase has been preliminarily dated to the Late Assyrian period. An earlier more substantial phase of architecture, also of Late Assyrian date, includes a substantial SE-NW running mudbrick wall (Z-005) [Fig. 10]. To the north of the wall, a pebble stone floor (Z-009) was found. To the south, a stone foundation (Z-014) running SE-NW was identified which may represent an internal dividing wall for a room. A partially preserved plastered surface (Z-019) represents the floor level for the Late Assyrian occupation. It is clear from the results of Operation Z that the large building seen in the geophysical survey was located near the corner of the city wall defined in Operation Y.

**Concluding remarks**

The final excavation season at Ziyaret Tepe produced a number of important results. Perhaps most interestingly, we see a highly conservative city plan that remains stable throughout the Late Assyrian period. In the Bronze Palace, the location of the palace remains stable across three centuries. Likewise, the general use of space in the Late Assyrian period in two phases of Operation K and Operation W parallel this trend. While modification of existing structures was common, it would appear that the overall urban fabric of Late Assyrian Tušhan, established by royal decree in 882 BC, showed remarkable conventionality through subsequent generations before its abandonment at the end of the Assyrian empire.


Fig. 1: Topographic plan of Ziyaret Tepe showing the areas of excavation, 2000-2013.

Fig. 2: Plan of the Operation AN Bronze Palace, Phase II. This plan shows the location of Room 19 discovered during the 2013 excavations.
Fig. 3: Photograph of Late Assyrian drainage channel in Operation AN.

Fig. 4: Photograph of Late Assyrian mudbrick gaming board (ZT 41642, N-835).
Fig. 5: Early Late Assyrian cuneiform tablet (ZT 41575, N-829) found in a pit in the Bronze Palace AN.

Fig. 6: Plan of the Operation K building showing the later phase of Late Assyrian domestic structures adjacent to the city wall.
Fig. 7: Photograph of the excavations in Trench 1 in Operation W showing the successive layers of cobble courtyard in the building.

Fig. 8: Clay sealing (ZT 44031, W-005) with multiple seal impressions. The amalgamated impression includes a winged genie, perhaps another figure, the sebeti (seven stars), at least three individual bright stars, and a small collection of cuneiform signs. One seal consists of the sebeti and a star under which is a bull. Another has a few signs of cuneiform and either a squat figure or tree, the third only preserves the bottom part of the winged genie.
Fig. 9: Plan of the Operation Y city wall in the Late Assyrian phase.
Fig. 10: Plan of the main Late Assyrian phase occupation in Operation Z.